

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 CAIRO 18056

NODIS CHEROKEE

STADIS//////////

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

USDEL NO. 28

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.)
SUBJECT: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE IN LIGHT OF SADAT'S
- DECISION

1. WE MUST NOW GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO HOW WE WANT TO
PROCEED IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW SITUATION CREATED BY
WHAT SADAT SAID TO US PRIVATELY YESTERDAY AND HIS PUBLIC
COMMENTS AFTERWARDS. FIRST OBSERVATION IS THAT WHILE
THIS IS OBVIOUSLY A DISAPPOINTING DEVELOPMENT FOR US
IN THE SENSE THAT IT MAKES ARRANGING A NEXT ROUND OF TALKS
IN THE NEAR FUTURE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT AND PERHAPS IM-
POSSIBLE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT SADAT HAS
NOT CHANGED HIS POSITION IN ANY FUNDAMENTAL WAY ON THE
ISSUES THEMSELVES. IN HIS COMMENTS TO US YESTERDAY HE
MADE IT CLEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT WHILE THERE COULD BE
"NO BARGAINING" OVER TERRITORY OR SOVEREIGNTY, HE WAS
STILL WILLING TO AGREE THERE COULD BE "MINOR RECTIFICA-
TIONS" ON THE WEST BANK (HE MADE IT PLAIN THIS WAS THE
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ONLY FRONT WHERE THIS COULD BE CONTEMPLATED) IF WE PRO-
POSED THIS. THIS HAS REALLY BEEN SADAT'S POSITION ALL
ALONG. HE ALSO REITERATED AT LENGTH HIS WILLINGNESS TO
"GO TO THE END OF THE ROAD" WITH RESPECT TO SECURITY
ARRANGEMENTS AND THE NATURE OF PEACE, AND TO CONTINUE
DIRECT CONTACTS WITH ISRAEL--BUT ONLY IF IT IS CLEAR
THAT TERRITORIAL CHANGES (OTHER THAN MINOR WEST BANK

MODIFICATIONS) WILL NOT BE A SUBJECT FOR NEGOTIATION.

2. CLEARLY IN YESTERDAY'S MEETING THE ELEMENTS OF ANGER AND EXASPERATION AT RECENT ISRAELI ACTIONS--PARTICULARLY THE WAY THEY HANDLED THE AL-ARISH ENCLAVE BUSINESS--WAS APPARENT IN SADAT'S PRESENTATION. BUT HERMANN AND I BOTH FEEL IT WOULD BE AN ERROR TO CONCLUDE FROM THIS THAT THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE SADAT COULD BE PERSUADED TO CHANGE HIS POSITION ON THE TALKS ONCE HE "SIMMERS DOWN". THINGS HAVE PROBABLY GONE TOO FAR FOR THIS. AS WAS THE CASE IN JERUSALEM LAST WINTER WHEN HE PULLED HIS DELEGATION OUT OF THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE TALKS, THERE WAS A TRIGGERING MECHANISM BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY THE DECISION REFLECTED AN ACCUMULATING SENSE OF FRUSTRATION ARISING FROM SADAT'S PERCEPTION OF ISRAEL'S TACTICS AND ITS FAILURE TO RESPOND "IN THE SAME SPIRIT" TO HIS BOLD AND SWEEPING APPROACH TO PEACE-MAKING. ALTHOUGH WE ARE DEALING WITH A MAN WHO WAS ANGERED AT A RECENT DEVELOPMENT, WE ARE ALSO DEALING WITH ONE WHO, WE ARE INCREASINGLY INCLINED TO BELIEVE, HAS RELUCTANTLY COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE SADAT INITIATIVE HAS NOT PAID OFF AND THAT HE MUST NOW BEGIN TO REBUILD HIS BRIDGES TO THE ARAB WORLD. WITH HIS ACTION YESTERDAY, HOWEVER, HE IS THUS FAR DOING SO, IT SEEMS TO US, IN A MANNER THAT DOES NOT SLAM THE DOOR IN ANY FINAL SENSE. BUT IT IS CLEAR HE HAS CHARTED A DIFFERENT PATH TO THAT DOOR IN THE SENSE THAT HE IS NO LONGER PREPARED TO SETTLE FOR A SET
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OF PRINCIPLES THAT RETAIN ANY SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT OF AMBIGUITY ON THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION. PUT ANOTHER WAY, HE HAS RETURNED FOUR SQUARE TO WHAT THE EGYPTIANS (AND JORDANIANS) CLAIM WE TOLD THEM RESOLUTION 242 MEANT WHEN WE WERE PRESSING THEM TO ACCEPT IT IN 1967--I.E., NO CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL BORDERS, AND THE RETURN OF MOST OF THE WEST BANK TO JORDAN, IN EXCHANGE FOR PEACE, RECOGNITION AND SECURITY. THE EGYPTIANS HAVE CORRECTLY REMINDED US THAT WE AGREED TO INCLUDE THE LANGUAGE ABOUT "THE INADMISSABILITY OF THE ACQUISITION OF TERRITORY BY WAR" AS THE PRICE FOR THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF 242. THE SAUDIS ARE OBVIOUSLY ALSO AT PRESENT SEEKING TO MOVE SADAT IN THIS DIRECTION.

3. THE SECOND QUESTION WE MIGHT ASK IS TO WHAT EXTENT OUR OWN IDEAS, AS I CONVEYED THEM TO KAMEL, PLAYED A ROLE IN SADAT'S DECISION. WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS WAS A RELATIVELY MINOR FACTOR. SADAT HARDLY COMMENTED ON OUR IDEAS BEYOND MAKING THE GENERAL OBSERVATION THAT PRESIDENT CARTER SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE "BROAD PRINCIPLES" RATHER THAN "THE DETAILS" OF A PEACE SETTLEMENT. SADAT GAVE EVERY EVIDENCE OF HAVING MADE UP HIS

MIND ABOUT WHAT HE HAD TO DO BEFORE HE EVEN LEARNED OF OUR IDEAS. WHEN THEY WERE REPORTED TO HIM THEY PROBABLY STRUCK HIM AS BEING TOO LITTLE TOO LATE AND WE IMAGINE IT HAD THE EFFECT OF CONFIRMING HIM IN THE COURSE HE HAD EARLIER DETERMINED UPON.

4. THE FIRST JUDGMENT WE MUST MAKE IS WHETHER WE THINK WE HAVE A CHANCE OF PERSUADING SADAT TO CHANGE HIS MIND

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NODIS CHEROKEE

STADIS//////////

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

USDEL NO. 28

ABOUT FURTHER TALKS, EITHER BY MY HAVING MORE SESSIONS WITH HIM, OR BY HAVING YOU COME TO THE AREA AS PLANNED IN THE HOPES OF ARRANGING TRIPARTITE TALKS FOR SOMETIME IN SEPTEMBER. IN OUR JUDGMENT, WE CANNOT HAVE ANY ASSURANCE THAT WE STAND A REASONABLE CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING IN SUCH AN EFFORT. A TRIP BY YOU, THEN, IF IT IS CONCEIVED AND PUT OUT AS HAVING AS ITS OBJECTIVE CHANGING SADAT'S MIND ABOUT THE TALKS, RUNS A STRONG RISK OF ENDING IN FAILURE. WE THINK IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR YOU TO COME OUT WITH THIS AS THE ANNOUNCED OBJECTIVE.

5. A MORE PLAUSIBLE OPTION WOULD BE FOR YOU TO PROCEED WITH YOUR TRIP WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF BROADER OBJECTIVE. THIS WOULD BE TO PROCEED ALONG THE LINES WE HAD PREVIOUSLY PLANNED, TREATING THE SADAT DECISION AS AN ADVERSE DEVELOPMENT, BUT NOT SOMETHING THAT WOULD JUSTIFY

DERAILING US FROM THE OVERALL STRATEGY WE HAVE SO CARE-
FULLY BUILT UP OVER THE PAST MONTHS. YOUR TRIP WOULD BE
PROJECTED AS HAVING THE OBJECTIVE OF DISCUSSING OUR
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IDEAS FOR BREAKING THE IMPASSE IN NEGOTIATIONS, NOW MADE
MORE OBVIOUS BY SADAT'S LATEST MOVE. DURING YOUR TRIP,
YOU WOULD, OF COURSE, SEEK TO PERSUADE SADAT TO CHANGE
HIS MIND ABOUT FURTHER TALKS, GIVING HIM THE BASIS FOR
THIS BY ENABLING HIM TO SAY THAT YOU HAD EXPLAINED TO
HIM THE FULL THRUST OF THE US APPROACH. BUT SADAT WOULD
STILL WANT TO SEE THE US "TAKE A POSITION"--BY WHICH HE
OF COURSE MEANS A PUBLIC POSITION--ON THE ISSUES. WE
WOULD BE LEFT WITH THE DIFFICULT DECISION OF WHETHER YOU
WOULD THEN LEAVE WITH THE
PARTIES WRITTEN FORMULATIONS (WHICH WOULD QUICKLY BECOME
PUBLIC).

6. IF WE WERE TO PROCEED TO DO SO, IT WOULD CERTAINLY
TRIGGER A STRONG NEGATIVE REACTION FROM THE BEGIN GOV-
ERNMENT ON THE GROUNDS THAT WE WERE SEEKING TO IMPOSE A
"US PLAN" IN THE ABSENCE OF NEGOTIATIONS. WE WOULD BE
VULNERABLE TO ISRAELI CHARGES THAT WE WERE DOING THIS,
MOREOVER, AFTER SADAT HAD BROKEN OFF NEGOTIATIONS AND
IN THE FACE OF NEW "PRECONDITIONS" THAT SADAT HAD IMPOSED
FOR RESUMING THEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF WE DO NOT PUT
FORWARD OUR IDEAS IN WRITTEN FORM AS SOMETHING WE SUPPORT
AND ARE PREPARED TO STAND BY, WE ARE NOT LIKELY TO ARREST
THE TREND TOWARD DISILLUSIONMENT WITH US EITHER ON THE
PART OF SADAT, OR IN A BROADER CONTEXT THROUGHOUT THE
ARAB WORLD. IN REFLECTING ON YESTERDAY'S MEETING WITH
SADAT, I AM STRUCK BY THE NUMBER OF TIMES HE REFERRED
TO THE NEED TO "PROTECT THE US IMAGE" IN THE ARAB WORLD.
AT ONE POINT HE SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT INTEND
TO DO SO, IT WOULD BE EASY TO MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL BY
ATTACKING THE US FOR ITS MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO
ISRAEL. AND HE HAS, OF COURSE, GONE PUBLIC WITH THE
CHARGE THAT WE PROVIDE ISRAEL WITH SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY
ON EGYPT. I WAS ALSO STRUCK BY THE LANGUAGE IN PRINCE
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SAUD'S LETTER TO YOU (JIDDA 5595) WARNING OF THE DANGER
OF "FRUSTRATION" IN THE ARAB WORLD WHEN IT "REALIZES THAT
THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT TAKE AN INDEPENDENT STANCE
TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST ISSUES IN ALL ITS ASPECTS AND WILL
NOT ENDEAVOR TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON ISRAEL FOR
THE ENFORCEMENT OF SUCH (US) STANCE...". THESE MAY BE

FAINT AND VEILED SIGNALS, AND IT IS ADMITTEDLY DIFFICULT TO KNOW HOW MUCH THEY REPRESENT A GATHERING STORM AND HOW MUCH THEY ARE SIMPLY PRESSURE TACTICS ON US WITHOUT PORTENDING ANYTHING MORE OMINOUS IN THE WAY OF ARAB ACTIONS. HAVING EXPERIENCED THE VEILED SIGNALS IN LATE 1972 AND EARLY 1973 WHICH WE TENDED TO DISCOUNT AT THE TIME, HOWEVER, I DO NOT THINK WE CAN AFFORD TO IGNORE THEM TOTALLY TODAY.

7. ANOTHER OPTION WE MIGHT CONSIDER IS FOR US TO DO NOTHING FOR AWHILE. WE COULD SAY WITHOUT BEATING AROUND THE BUSH THAT WE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ARRANGE TALKS AND THAT WE WERE WAITING FOR THE PARTIES TO PROPOSE AN ALTERNATIVE. THIS MIGHT HAVE THE MERIT OF CAUSING SOME SOBER SECOND THOUGHTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE. BUT WE CAN HAVE NO CONFIDENCE THAT EVEN THIS WOULD INDUCE EITHER SIDE TO CHANGE THE POLICIES THAT ARE NOW THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPEDIMENT TO NEGOTIATIONS. FOR THE EGYPTIANS, MOREOVER, IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE A RENEGING ON OUR COMMITMENT AT CAMP DAVID. WHAT WE SAID THEN WAS THAT WE NEEDED AN EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSAL TO THE BEGIN PLAN BEFORE WE COULD MOVE TO BREAK THE IMPASSE, BUT WE SAID NOTHING SO FAR AS I CAN RECALL ABOUT NEEDING A RESUMPTION OF DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS. SUCH A POLICY WOULD ALSO PROJECT THE IMAGE OF US INACTION IN THE FACE OF A GATHERING CRISIS. WE DO NOT SEE IT AS A TENABLE OPTION.

8. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR THE US TO DECIDE THAT THIS IS THE TIME TO PUT FORWARD ITS OWN VIEWS IN
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NODIS CHEROKEE

STADIS//////////

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

USDEL NO. 28

THE FORM OF A MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS OR "REPORT TO THE NATION". THIS IS PRESUMABLY THE KIND OF "FORTHRIGHT" POSITION-TAKING THAT SADAT IS EXPECTING FROM US. TO THE EXTENT, HOWEVER, THAT WE ATTEMPTED TO WORK IN POSITIONS OR PHRASEOLOGY THAT SATISFIED SADAT--SUCH AS "INADMISSABILITY OF THE ACQUISITION OF TERRITORY BY WAR"--IT WOULD ONLY MAKE GETTING THE ISRAELIS TO THE TABLE MORE DIFFICULT. A PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS COULD ALSO, HOWEVER, BE CONSIDERED IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR PUTTING FORWARD OUR IDEAS FOR THE BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS--THAT IS TO SAY, AS AN ESSENTIAL WAY OF MOBILIZING BOTH US DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR OUR VIEWS ON THE ELEMENTS OF A REASONABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT.

9. I AM LEFT WITH THE OVERALL BELIEF, AT LEAST AT THIS PRELIMINARY STAGE OF OUR DELIBERATIONS, THAT WHILE SADAT HAS INDEED THROWN US A DIFFICULT CURVE BALL, WE SHOULD NOT TREAT IT AS SUFFICIENT REASON TO ABANDON A STRATEGY TO WHICH WE HAVE GIVEN THE MOST CAREFUL THOUGHT, AND
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TOWARD WHICH WE HAVE BEEN BUILDING, THESE MANY MONTHS. MY RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE THAT WE PROCEED, IN SPITE OF THE DIFFICULTIES, ALONG THE LINES OF PARAGRAPH 5, I.E., THAT YOU MAKE YOUR TRIP AS PLANNED, THAT YOU DISCUSS WITH THE ISRAELIS AND SADAT (IN THAT ORDER) OUR IDEAS IN THEIR FULL FORM, THAT YOU ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE THE TWO SIDES TO AGREE TO TALKS AT SOME LATER DATE ON THE BASIS OF THESE IDEAS, BUT THAT FAILING THIS, WE BE PREPARED TO LEAVE OUR IDEAS WITH THE PARTIES IN WRITTEN FORM AND MOUNT A SUSTAINED PUBLIC EFFORT TO JUSTIFY THEM AS THE ONLY POSSIBLE BASIS FOR A FIRST STAGE AGREEMENT. THE LAST STEP WILL OBVIOUSLY CAUSE US TROUBLE WITH THE ISRAELIS (AND OUR POSITION MAY ALSO NOW BE SEEN AS INADEQUATE BY SADAT), BUT TO BOTH SIDES WE WOULD HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO BE TOUGH AND TAKE THE POSITION THAT WE WILL NEITHER BACK OFF THOSE FORMULATIONS NOR GO BEYOND THEM. IF WE DO THIS--AND ABOVE ALL WE DO IT PROMPTLY--

WE STAND AN OURSIDE CHANCE OF ULTIMATELY GETTING THE TWO SIDES BACK INTO A NEGOTIATING POSTURE. IN MY ESTIMATION THIS COURSE IS THE ONLY ONE THAT OFFERS SUCH AN OUTSIDE CHANCE. IF WE ARE TO MOVE ALONG THIS COURSE, HOWEVER, WE NEED TO BEGIN QUICKLY PREPARING THE GROUND PUBLICLY AND WITH CONGRESS FOR SUPPORT OF OUR JUDGMENT THAT THE DIRECT EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS HAVE GONE AS FAR AS THEY CAN AND HAVE REACHED A GENUINE IMPASSE NOW. THIS WILL NOT BE EASY IN THE FACE OF THE PERCEPTION OF MANY THAT SADAT HAS AGAIN BROKEN OFF NEGOTIATIONS AND SET FORTH PRECONDITIONS, WITHOUT GIVING THOSE NEGOTIATIONS A FAIR CHANCE--EVEN THOUGH WE ALL KNOW THEY WERE NOT GOING TO GO ANYWHERE ON THEIR OWN IN ANY CASE. WE WILL CERTAINLY NEED TO SAY THAT BOTH SIDES SHARE THE BLAME FOR THE IMPASSE--ISRAEL BECAUSE OF ITS WEST BANK/GAZA POSITION AND SADAT FOR NOT AGREEING TO FURTHER TALKS.

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10. FINALLY, I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU AS WELL AS THE OTHER POLICY LEADERS IN WASHINGTON HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT I SEE AS THE ESSENCE OF THE ISSUE THE UNITED STATES FACES. IT IS REALLY THE ISSUE THAT ALL ALONG HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF OUR POLICY ON THE ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM, WITH THE DIFFERENCE THAT SADAT IS NOW MOVING IN SUCH A WAY TO MAKE US FACE UP TO IT. HE IS IN EFFECT SAYING THAT HE HAS GIVEN US NINE MONTHS TO TRY TO EASE THE TWO SIDES INTO NEGOTIATIONS BUT BECAUSE OF THE ISRAELI POSITION ON THE WEST BANK TERRITORIAL QUESTION AND OUR INABILITY TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT, THIS HAS NOT WORKED. HE IS IN THE PROCESS OF ABANDONING NEGOTIATIONS AS A MEANS OF GETTING US TO HELP HIM SOLVE HIS PROBLEMS AND REVERTING TO A POLICY THAT SEEKS TO BRING HIS BROADER STRATEGIC EQUATION INTO PLAY: I.E., THAT BY HAVING THE US "DECLARE ITS POSITION" HE WILL PRODUCE MORE CLEARCUT DAYLIGHT BETWEEN THE US AND ISRAEL WITH AN EVENTUAL COST TO ISRAEL IN TERMS OF THE RESULTANT STRAIN IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS. IN THIS--HIS REVERSION TO THE EARLIER STRATEGY--HE WILL HAVE FULL SUPPORT OF THE OTHER ARAB STATES. IF WE ARE TO HAVE ANY HOPE OF AVOIDING THE UNPALATABLE CHOICE THIS FORCES UPON US, WE WILL NEED TO BRING OUR STRATEGY INTO PLAY PROMPTLY AND DECISIVELY, WITH SOMEWHAT LESS CONCERN, IT SEEMS TO ME, FOR ATTEMPTING TO FINE-TUNE IT SO THAT IT MAKES NO WAVES IN ANY DIRECTION--AN OBJECTIVE THAT IS UN-ATTAINABLE IN ANY CASE IN MY JUDGMENT.

11. I RECOGNIZE THAT UNDER THIS OPTION, THE ODDS ARE WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO AVOID THIS UNPALATABLE CHOICE, SINCE A LIKELY OUTCOME (DEPENDING ON THE PRECISE CONTENTS OF OUR FINAL IDEAS) IS THAT SADAT WILL LET US

"IMPOSE" OUR VIEWS ON HIM AND ISRAEL WILL NOT. THE
FACT THAT I HAVE NOT ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF WHAT
WE DO WHEN WE FACE THIS DILEMMA DOES NOT MEAN THAT I
UNDERESTIMATE ITS IMPORTANCE AND THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS
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NODIS CHEROKEE

STADIS//////////

FOR THE SECRETARY AND SAUNDERS FROM ATHERTON

USDEL NO. 28

IT POSES FOR THE PRESIDENT. I AM ACUTELY CONSCIOUS
OF THEM, AS I HAVE BEEN FOR THE MANY YEARS I HAVE BEEN
WORKING ON THIS PROBLEM. I DO WANT TO UNDERSCORE MY
BELIEF, HOWEVER, THAT THE COURSE OF ACTION WE HAVE SO
PAINSTAKINGLY HAMMERED OUT IN RECENT MONTHS IS ABOUT
AS CLOSE AS WE CAN GET TO THE ESSENTIAL COMPROMISE WE
MUST WORK OUT BETWEEN "IMPOSING" OUR VIEWS ON THE ONE
HAND, AND ON THE OTHER, ABANDONING THE PROCESS TO THE
STALEMATE THAT WILL INEVITABLY ENSUE IF WE DO NOT TAKE
ACTION ALONG THESE LINES, WITH SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES
FOR US INTERESTS IN THE AREA. OUR APPROACH STILL MAKES
NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES THE FOCUS OF THE PEACE
PROCESS. I BELIEVE IT WILL BE SEEN AS REASONABLE TO A
BROAD SPECTRUM OF US PUBLIC OPINION, AND ULTIMATELY TO

A SIGNIFICANT BODY OF ISRAELI OPINION AS WELL.

12. ONE FINAL THOUGHT THAT OCCURS TO US IS THAT IF WE
DO DECIDE TO PUT FORWARD OUR IDEAS AS A FORMAL PROPOSAL,
IT MIGHT BE WORTH ATTEMPTING TO GET EUROPEAN SUPPORT BY
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BRIEFING THE EUROPEANS ABOUT OUR APPROACH GENERALLY,
THEREBY LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR A LATER EFFORT TO GET
MORE SPECIFIC ENDORSEMENT OF WHAT WE WERE PUTTING FOR-
WARD.

13. AMBASSADOR EILTS CONCURS IN THE ABOVE. EILTS

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